



# Engaging with the Armed Forces community

**A toolkit for churches**

The **Methodist** Church 

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# Foreword

The Methodist Church has long offered ministry to the Armed Forces. In the mid-19th century, the people of God called Methodists responded to a national appeal to build places of worship for soldiers in the garrison town of Aldershot, Hampshire and the Home Missions Department convened the first meeting of the Army Committee – which continues to this day as the Methodist Forces Board.

For many years, Methodist Ministry to the Armed Forces was organised by local congregations and by a valiant group of soldiers and sailors who had trained as local preachers. Building on a history stretching back to 1881, the Church continues to send ordained Methodist ministers to serve as Armed Forces chaplains. There are also opportunities for lay and ordained ministry in local contexts, with cadet forces or full-time or reserve service personnel. In each context, the aim is to offer significant pastoral care and help individuals to address the ethical issues raised by military service.

As a signal of the Methodist Church's continued commitment, the President and Secretary of the Conference signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2017. The Methodist Forces Board offers this resource to support local churches and circuits to engage with that commitment. It is hoped that the following pages contain resources that will help equip you to engage with the military communities near to you, encourage you to think about the ministry God may be calling you to, and indicate useful sources of additional help and support.

Above all, it is our prayer that this resource encourages you to see the missional opportunities in supporting military personnel, families and veterans in your local context.

Revd Dr Chrissie Howe  
Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board

# Overview

**O**ur Calling is just as valid in the context of the Armed Forces as it is elsewhere, yet there are perhaps different considerations when living it out. This resource seeks to support the Methodist Church to do this well. It is offered in the context of the Methodist Church having signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a Methodist witness to the Armed Forces for over 150 years. Generations of Methodist chaplains have understood that God's grace compels us to go to all people with a message of peace, love and hope – whoever they are and wherever they may be.<sup>2</sup>

There are 196,140 serving personnel (including reservists) in Her Majesty's Forces.<sup>3</sup> The government estimates there are 2.4m veterans in the UK<sup>4</sup> and around 10m people with a connection to the Armed Forces.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, most local churches are already likely to be engaged with the Armed Forces in some way. The Church has much to offer the Armed Forces community<sup>6</sup> and much it can learn from this community too.

This resource is intended to:

- help you in your planning for mission with the Armed Forces community
- provide insight and identify sources of support to help you overcome some of the challenges associated with mission among the Armed Forces
- give you practical ideas on what has worked elsewhere, including case studies to reflect on.

<sup>1</sup> More information on the Armed Forces Covenant is set out on the **Forces Chaplaincy web pages** of the Methodist Church website.

<sup>2</sup> To assist the people called Methodist to reflect on some of the issues that are raised by involvement with the Armed Forces, a new resource will be shared in Connexional Year 2022/23.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Government statistics for 2021, accessed **here**.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Government estimate for 2017, published 2019, **here**.

<sup>5</sup> This includes those currently serving, reservists, veterans, families. Source: Government estimate, published on p.4 of the **AF Covenant** overview document.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this resource, the term 'Armed Forces community' is taken to include those currently serving, reservists, veterans, the families of all these groups, and those organisations/charities dedicated to supporting them.

## Why should we get involved with the Armed Forces community?

A Methodist Way of Life encourages us to care for those around us and to practise hospitality and generosity. Many of the suggestions contained in this resource are an encouragement to be good neighbours. When our prayers and actions connect us with new people, it can be a catalyst for powerful learning that both changes and challenges us.

A Methodist Way of Life also asks us to think about how we can help people beyond our community and speak of the love of God, sharing our faith with others. This resource will help to put these aspects of our faith into words and actions that the Armed Forces community can engage with.

Engagement with the Armed Forces can enrich our Church family. Personnel currently in the Armed Forces are typically younger people who will have had significant training. They tend to be resilient, determined and resourceful. Many are used to leading others, and they bring a wide variety of experience and fresh perspective to their engagement with the Church. Armed Forces personnel and their families are action-oriented people. Their training helps them to identify barriers and come up with creative approaches to resolve these. Most will be posted to a location for a period of about two years.

## What does the Church have to offer?

Those connected with the Armed Forces often live a transient life, and a local church community can offer a sense of 'rootedness' – local knowledge, strong relationships, a centred place for belonging. This is a different form of belonging to that offered by the Armed Forces. It's often the simple things – like our time, a listening ear, linking people to places of advice and support, or the offer of prayer – that make a significant difference.

Faith exploration in the Armed Forces is not straightforward, despite experiences among this community being particularly likely to prompt reflection on life's fragility, purpose and meaning. Discipleship of Jesus is also challenging in the Armed Forces. Maintaining connection with a local church, even with a denomination, can be difficult due to a combination of work location, duties, regular moves or time spent travelling or abroad. Christians in the Armed Forces may well have experience of many different styles of Church. This can be constructive but may also be confusing. Welcoming our brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever their journey may have been, can provide a significant encouragement to spur them on in their faith.

If your church has a regular space in the week that is open to the entire community, promoting it through local Armed Forces media channels and Armed Forces charities could enable more connections to be made with the Armed Forces community.

## Some simple starting points

If you want to increase interaction with the Armed Forces community, you could begin by finding out whether any of the churches you are connected with already have links with them. If not, consider whether your approach could in fact be strengthened by working alongside other churches. Many military establishments are located in rural areas, and rural churches are particularly likely to benefit from working together. Rural churches may find the support and advice of the **Arthur Rank Foundation** helpful in this work.

Building relationships is often a good place to start – perhaps you could reach out to Armed Forces charities that are active in your location. **SSAFA** – The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (supporting those who are currently serving and veterans) and the **Royal British Legion** (offering support and advice for veterans) are two of the biggest and therefore likely to be operating locally. You can find contact details on their websites.

If you want to initiate contact with the Armed Forces, you can search on the internet for the contact details of your nearest camp/base/station. Adding 'HIVE' to the search engine may help to find more local information on a particular site. The HIVE is the military's information network, with local information tailored by each local HIVE office. The HIVE staff routinely distribute information about events and activities to their local Armed Forces community but, as with any communication tool, it will not reach everyone.

A good point of contact will often be the chaplain assigned to the unit stationed at a particular location (although they may cover a wider geographical area and be physically elsewhere for much of their time) or the Welfare Officer. The HIVE staff should be able to put you in touch with the relevant personnel.



## CASE STUDY

# CHURCH WELCOMED ONTO MILITARY CAMP IN THE NORTH WEST

## BACKGROUND

At the request of Christians working in a school on a military camp in the North West, a conversation started between the military chaplain, representatives of the school, the Methodist Forces Board (MFB) Projects Officer, and the local Methodist church.

It was agreed to pilot a monthly creative session with Christian content, for families to attend after school over the course of one academic year. The MFB provided a small grant towards this trial to cover food and craft costs.

The military camp is an isolated establishment in the heart of the countryside. Although there are large towns within 20 minutes' drive, the transport links make it difficult for the families who live in the military housing on the camp to access off-site activities. The primary school is on the same base. It

is staffed by civilians and, while it is open to civilian families, it is predominantly made up of military families. When one unit moves out and another moves in, a significant proportion of the school community changes overnight.

The chaplain, colleagues in the welfare team and the school, all identified that the families would benefit from something offered by the civilian population. They welcomed the opportunity to work with the local church to provide a new activity that would help people become more connected.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. The chaplain was pivotal in bringing the local church on board with serving the community on site. With the chaplain's support, a series of planning meetings were held at the school to ensure that all the various elements were considered.

2. It was important to have a lead agency for the recruitment of ecumenical volunteers (several denominations were represented) to run the event. Safeguarding, insurance, data protection arrangements, etc, were all provided by the local Methodist church, which took the lead.
3. The school provided a suitable space for the delivery of the monthly event, with some of the staff volunteering their own time to ensure sufficient volunteers. The headteacher was proactive in offering the school's support as he acknowledged the challenge for the outside community in making an offer to military families who find it equally challenging to get off-site.
4. It helped that people knew it was a pilot: There was a repeated request for feedback from all involved – to review the learning and adjust accordingly at the following session.
5. A key person with sufficient capacity and passion to run the activity was essential. It required more careful planning once the Deacon moved to a new appointment.
6. The chaplain was able to attend on occasion, but their duties meant that this was not always possible. Nevertheless, the event was able to proceed because of the trust that had been built with the team of volunteers. They consistently delivered a high-quality event that engaged the families well.
7. Volunteers had significant pastoral conversations with those parents who came to the sessions. The chaplain was kept informed of these and followed up where necessary (confidentiality was respected).
8. The chaplain was able to engage with the military community at the event in an informal setting and, as a result of this engagement, was asked about baptism, etc.

## SUMMARY

This was a positive experience for those involved. There was a willingness to work together on something to support the military community, without those involved needing to claim all the credit. Keeping the

sessions to a defined period and calling it a 'pilot' meant that expectation was managed within the bounds that volunteers could commit to.

The local church has learnt a significant amount about life for people in the military, which would not have happened without this opportunity. The church is now better able to pray for the military and offer other forms of support, such as one-off events in the summer.

The military benefited from having input from the outside community; and the school was able to offer an additional extra-curricular activity to the children, which also engaged the wider family.

The benefits of such activities are often hard to measure in human terms, but the relationships that have been formed or strengthened have been helpful to many involved.

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

You may want to consider the following questions and reflect on them with others in your church or circuit:

- Who in our local area may find it more challenging to access the rhythms of our church?
- Who has God put on our heart to connect with?
- Who do we know who might have knowledge of what life is like for these groups/individuals?
- What further information do we need? Who else might we need to speak to?
- Who do we know with a passion to take the Good News to people who might not consider accessing our church?
- How could we bring all these people together to learn from one another, seek God, and plan for something new to help bridge the gaps?
- Who do we need to keep informed as we begin to dream and plan?

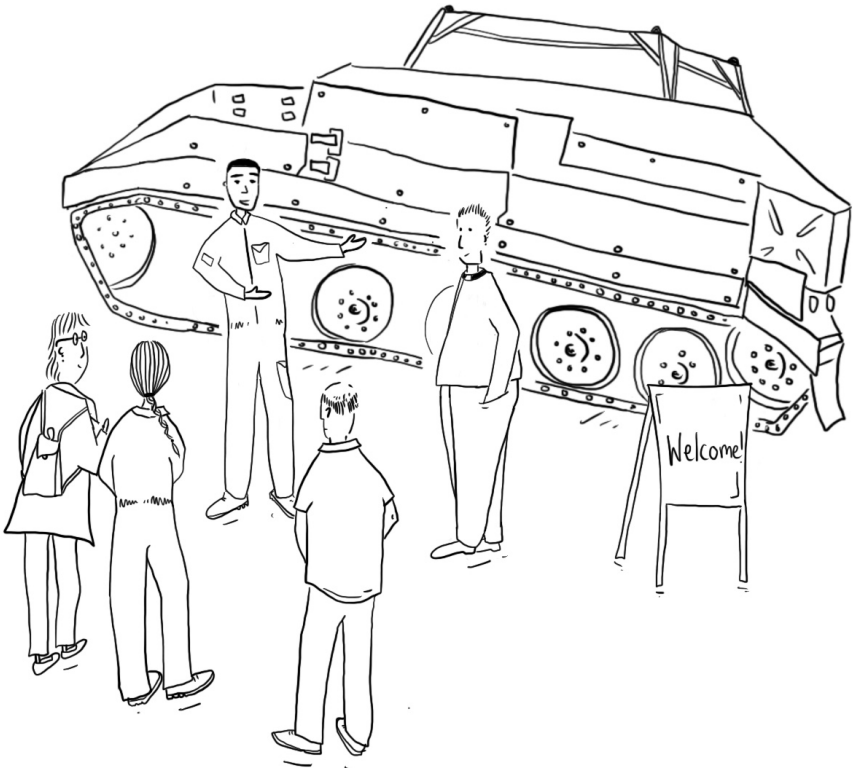
# Steps towards greater engagement with your local Armed Forces community

Following are some ideas for how you could respond to your local Armed Forces community. Do tailor this list to suit your own situation.

## You could:

- Indicate on your church website/social media accounts/in the building that the Methodist Church has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and that you are open to learning from and supporting people from the Armed Forces community.
- Learn more about what serving personnel and their families experience as a result of their service, by accessing any of the Families Federation magazines: *Home Port* (Royal Navy) [nff.org.uk/homeport-magazine/](http://nff.org.uk/homeport-magazine/), *Army & You* [armyandyou.co.uk/](http://armyandyou.co.uk/) and *Envoy* (RAF) [www.raf-ff.org.uk/publications/envoy-magazine/](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk/publications/envoy-magazine/)
- Use Methodist resources to support your church to mark Remembrance season well. The Methodist Forces Board has published resources [here](#).
- Find out about significant dates in the Armed Forces calendar that the church could mark. Many churches have found interactive ways to commemorate events such as the 75th anniversary of VE Day or the centenary anniversary of the end of World War 1. You may want to do similar. You could also consider offering a church presence in your local Armed Forces Day, which is held in June each year.

- Attend an open day at your nearest military camp/base/station or reach out to local veterans' organisations, such as the Royal British Legion, to build up your church's links to the wider Armed Forces community.



### If you have a military establishment in your area you could:

- Invite someone to come and talk to the church about what goes on there and any ways in which you could engage with them.
- Talk to a military chaplain about how you could partner with them in serving the Armed Forces community. If you liaise with a chaplain, it is worth bearing in mind:
  - Chaplains are busy people. When they are on operational deployment or exercise they won't have capacity to respond swiftly. If they don't respond straightaway, do persist.
  - Chaplains, like the rest of the military, move postings approximately every two years. Expect regular changes in your relationships with the chaplaincy, including which denomination you are working with.
  - Chaplains are there for people of all faiths and none. We can help them by bearing this in mind when we're talking to them about working together.
  - Careful negotiation will often be required before the chain of command will allow families to be signposted to your church; building and maintaining relationships with key personnel on a camp/base/station will help.

If you want to consider planting a New Places for New People faith community in an area that has a significant Armed Forces community, talk to Circuit or District colleagues who can advise on how to take this forward with the Evangelism & Growth Team. More information on New Places for New People is available at [www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/start-new-places-for-new-people/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/start-new-places-for-new-people/)

Further suggestions, for churches starting from different places, is provided in Appendix 2.

## Some common myths about the Armed Forces

### **We don't have military families in this area**

While some parts of the UK have a clear military presence, in other areas their presence is much less obvious. Interestingly, in relation to people currently serving in the Armed Forces, there are areas of the UK with higher-than-average representation, despite having some of the lowest numbers of bases/stations. Therefore, even where you may not see many signs of the military, there are likely to be many families with loved ones currently serving. They are just as much a part of the Armed Forces community.

There are also military personnel, sometimes accompanied by their families, who because of their workplace or the specialist nature of their work, may feel more isolated from the support of the wider Armed Forces community.

Of course, there are also veterans living in all parts of the UK. For a number of reasons, they may sometimes be slow to disclose their former service. This may be the case in some churches, as veterans may be concerned about the response to such a disclosure.

**What could you do to make it clear that disclosing their Armed Forces experience doesn't need to be a concern for them?**

## **Service families are not here for long, so probably won't want anything to do with the local church**

While service personnel receive new postings approximately every two years, this does not necessarily mean they will move that frequently (although many do). Some families choose to settle in an area and the person in Armed Forces service works away during the week, returning home at weekends. This is known as 'weekending'.

Many Armed Forces families will be happy with the support they receive from the military community, but there are still many reasons for them to engage with the local civilian community. A church family that understands that the Armed Forces lifestyle makes committing to regular attendance difficult, but welcomes and values them all the same, will make a significant difference to Armed Forces families.

**What could you do to make it clear that you welcome people who may struggle to attend physical gatherings on a frequent basis?**

## **Armed Forces chaplains provide for the spiritual needs of the military, so there's no need for us to do anything**

Chaplains provide spiritual, moral and pastoral support to the UK Armed Forces. They are a significant and well-regarded source of expertise within the military. They are there to provide support without judgement to personnel of all faiths and none. They work within the parameters for ministers, as determined by their sending church. In chaplaincy, they work ecumenically, with ministers of other denominations, and in some cases representatives of other faiths. If they cannot meet the needs of a particular serving person, they will make a link to civilian support, including other ministers, where necessary.

Given that there are roughly 300 commissioned chaplains currently serving around 80,000 personnel in the UK military, not to mention civilians, contractors and family members, it is clear that chaplains



have their work cut out. This is before considering that at any given time a number of them will be on deployment or exercise with their unit and therefore physically unavailable to those who have stayed behind. There is always likely to be additional work that the Church can support in a range of ways.

**How could your church proactively communicate what is on offer to the Armed Forces community in your area? How could you use social media to help with this?**



## **All service personnel live 'behind the wire'**

Actually, this varies considerably by service. For instance, the majority of Royal Navy personnel and families live in their own homes or in military-owned housing out in the community. In the British Army, it is still more common for personnel and their families to live on camp with other army families. Longer term, there are plans to see service personnel given greater choice and support in deciding where it is best for them and their families to live. Regardless of whether personnel live behind the wire or not, they still have a desire to be known and valued for who they are – something the church can excel at.

**How do you know the strengths and needs of your local area? Do you have ways of gently finding out if people are connected to the Armed Forces?**

## **The military takes care of all the needs of those who serve and their loved ones**

There are considerable resources available to serving personnel and their loved ones. You can find many of these sources of support, such as SSAFA or the Royal British Legion, through a quick internet search. While these forms of support are sufficient for many people, and the Armed Forces community are typically both resilient and resourceful, the military system cannot possibly meet everyone's needs. Inevitably, problems connected to service life arise for many reasons. Sometimes it is simply that the nature of service life exacerbates what would be a challenging situation for any of us.

**How can you use your listening skills and your awareness of local sources of support to help those who may require further assistance?**

## **Military families won't want help from civilians**

The UK military offers a strong sense of identity and significance. It values and provides for its people in ways that could teach us many helpful things. However, it is not an independent community. There are established links between many Armed Forces bases/stations and the communities in which they operate. The development of the Armed Forces Covenant has helped to highlight what civilian agencies and communities can do to reduce the disadvantage the Armed Forces community experiences as a result of serving the country. Progress has been made in areas as diverse as NHS waiting lists (when moving location due to a new military posting), the facility to suspend mobile phone contracts when serving abroad in HM Forces, access to school places, etc. It is inevitable that the Armed Forces will need and want to take up services that are only provided by a civilian community.

**What could you do now that would help you to respond more confidently to a future request from someone in the Armed Forces?**

## Tips for engaging with the Armed Forces community

As members of a local church, we already understand what it means to belong to a community. The Armed Forces is a different community, so understanding some of its culture and customs can help us in building bridges. The following points may be helpful:

### **Expect a constructive response when connecting with the military**

It can be unnerving to visit a military establishment for the first time. Remember the same is often true of people visiting a church building for the first time! To get onto a military site you will need to have a pre-booked appointment, know the name of the person you are meeting, and have a form of photo ID with you. Have confidence that, as someone representing a local church or circuit, your efforts to connect will be appreciated.

**Demonstrate that you are willing to learn** Serving personnel and their families don't expect us to know what they go through. However, listening to and learning about their experiences can help us to serve them better and will stimulate our prayers.

### **If launching a new activity in the community, do your homework**

It is easy to assume that we know what people need or want. Listening to the community is a good way to show grace and to learn. It will often reveal unexpected skills, local knowledge and strengths. The same is true of the Armed Forces community. For instance, you may run a youth club near a military establishment and be surprised that there are not more young people from Armed Forces families attending. However, some of these families choose for their young people to access boarding school to give them a consistent education and a stable group of friends, etc.

### **Seek endorsement from the military Chain of Command**

Serving personnel are often keen to know that an organisation or event/activity is sanctioned by their Chain of Command. This is true even if what is being offered is for the families, rather than the serving person. Getting this endorsement can make a big difference to take-up. Sometimes this can be as simple as arranging for personnel to hear about your event through their official bulletins.

### Accept that what you're planning/doing may only work for a season

Successful delivery of events or activities with the Armed Forces community is often dependent on the combination of personalities involved. Don't worry if your attempts to connect are rebuffed or if something that once worked well has to change. Military personnel are often moving on. This creates challenges, but also presents opportunities. You are likely to be dealing with a steady succession of individuals, so remain proactive in your communication. Always try to get an introduction to someone's successor.

### It is difficult for serving personnel to attend courses that run over several sessions

Serving personnel can find their duties change at short notice and they can face extended periods of time away, sometimes without an end date. They can therefore be reluctant to sign up to anything too far in advance, or where there is a commitment to attend multiple sessions.



## Planning an event/activity to engage with the Armed Forces community

Taking time now to form a plan of how to run something with the Armed Forces community will help you get it right later on. It will take time to work through this, but will increase your chances of establishing good connections. You will find more help on missional planning on **this page** of the Methodist Church website (particularly relevant are Step 2: 'Community Audit' and Step 3: 'Church Review').

### Some suggestions for your plan:

1. Listen to as many people as you know in the Armed Forces community. If you don't know any, try thinking about those who may be more in touch, eg Armed Forces chaplains, cadet force volunteers, reservists, those with family members who are in the Armed Forces, veterans, etc. Learn all you can.
2. Build bridges. Working with a military welfare team or a school that serves Armed Forces families or a military charity is likely to increase the number of connections that your church makes with the Armed Forces community.
3. How will you ensure that the relevant messages are shared with the people you are hoping to engage with? Do you know someone who could share messages with your primary audience? How will you support them to do that, eg by using social media/flyers/posters with all the key information?
4. The physical location where you run your event/activity will have a significant impact on how accessible it is to the Armed Forces community; not only in terms of physical access, but also in terms of their perception of who it is for. How will you ensure that the Armed Forces community know they're welcome to attend if it is held in a building that they wouldn't routinely access?

5. Think about where you will signpost people to for additional support, if it becomes apparent that they would value something more than you are equipped to provide. (For instance, the Methodist Forces Board has produced a guide to providing initial support for those with PTSD, which is available on the Methodist Church website: search 'PTSD').



## Tips

1

**Missional activity doesn't have to be expensive:** People are often willing to share their experience or skills, if you want to learn, and there are websites that allow you to produce professional looking materials for free (eg: canva.com, postermymwall.com, etc).

2

**Don't be tempted to do too much at the start:** It is better to start slowly and let things grow, rather than try to do too much too soon.

3

**Small things that are done consistently can have a significant impact on people's wellbeing:** Finding ways to communicate that you care for the Armed Forces community can mean a lot to them. Whether you post a note through the door with an invitation to a coffee morning or let them know about a church service or event, done regularly it conveys that you value them.

4

**Your availability and consistency are hugely valuable:** Don't discount these things just because they are not glamorous.



## Opportunities for engaging with the Armed Forces community

Below are a number of initiatives that have been delivered by the Methodist Forces Board (MFB) in support of Armed Forces chaplaincy at sites in the UK military over many years. They have come from a desire to walk with the Armed Forces community. As you consider how local Methodists could engage with the Armed Forces community in your local area, you may find these ideas helpful:

### Remembrance Sunday

Recognising that Remembrance is probably the most significant interface in the year between most Methodist churches and the Armed Forces community, the MFB has created a Remembrance resource, designed to support worship leaders to lead Remembrance well. It draws on Methodist Armed Forces chaplains' experience and is available on the **Methodist Church website**.

Consider how you might build on connection points with veterans. Could you extend an invitation to other church activities, or undertake some informal consultation with those who attend, to identify what next steps your church could take?

### Coffee mornings

Inviting the families of serving personnel to coffee mornings can work well. Hosting a coffee morning in your building may be accessible for some, but perhaps not everyone. Could you work with a school or community centre to run a session at a place that might be more straightforward for the Armed Forces community to access? You would then have partners who could promote the session to the community you are hoping to engage.

## Community BBQ

Offering to host a BBQ in conjunction with the unit chaplain may be a great way to get to know the Armed Forces community. Chaplains are often well-placed to bring the military community together, expressing their care to all those who form the unit, irrespective of rank, role or employer. Helping the military and civilian communities to mix more freely is a key aim within the Armed Forces Covenant, because it helps to build resilience.

## Courses

When you run courses for the community (eg money management/parenting/couples courses, etc) you may want to consider extending the invitation to a local Armed Forces site to encourage them to join you (but think through what allowances you may need to make – as per the 'Tips for engaging with the Armed Forces community').

## Holiday clubs

These clubs provide useful support to the military community, but also a chance for families to engage with the Church, and in some cases they may want to explore what faith in Jesus is about. Plan, ahead of time, how the invitation to join a holiday club is going to be shared with the military community.

## Messy Church

Messy Church has been well received in many parts of the military. Its focus on family ministry has created opportunities for military families to engage in activities together. This is significant, as many military families spend significant time apart. Pastoral conversations often happen as a result of the relationships built with families. As with any Messy Church, this is a volunteer-intensive ministry, but can be hugely fruitful.

Information about setting up a Messy Church is available at [www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/starting-out](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/starting-out).

## Walks

Offer a planned walk around the local area. Conversation often flows naturally, but if people are new to each other you may want to plan intentional pauses into the route and/or offer up a strategic question for reflection together, eg 'Where have you seen kindness expressed recently?' Could you ask a chaplain or the HIVE staff to share your invitation on relevant social media pages for a particular camp/base/station?



## Parent and child sessions

With the high rate of change within military establishments, having somewhere to go that is friendly and caring can make a huge difference to newcomers. Peer support is one of the primary support mechanisms within the serving community. Hosting one of these groups could help provide a building block for that peer support. If you already host one, how do you make it clear that people from the Armed Forces community are welcome?

## Pamper sessions

Many partners of serving personnel find that they are on their own for extended periods of time. Where they have children, this leads to long stretches of solo-parenting. Time simply to relax is at a premium and highly valued. The challenge for many is finding suitable childcare. Offering multiple sessions may be one way to allow people to engage in these sorts of opportunities.

## Who Let the Dads Out?

These sessions have proved very popular with military dads wherever they have been run. Often extremely busy during the week, these dads/carers appreciate the dedicated space and semi-structured activities for engaging with their children in friendly surroundings. The group is also popular among the mums, for obvious reasons. Support and further ideas are available at [www.careforthefamily.org.uk/faith-in-the-family/wltdo](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/faith-in-the-family/wltdo).

# Funding opportunities for those seeking to work with the Armed Forces community

**T**he Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust is the distributor of substantial public funding. This funding is part of the Government's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

## Four tips for accessing this fund:

1

Take opportunities to build relationships with the service personnel/veterans' charities in your area. Visit and learn more about their work. You will benefit from the support of those on your local unit when making an application to the Covenant Fund Trust.

2

Fund priorities change annually, as well as amounts available and who is eligible to apply. Sign up for the Covenant Fund Trust's email newsletter on their **website** and you'll be made aware of changes and the availability of any short-notice funding. As an example, in 2020 the Trust announced up to £20,000 for projects that work to reduce isolation in the Armed Forces community (but see note below on eligibility).

# 3

There is an eligibility checker on the website to help you determine whether your organisation can apply for funding. If your organisation/charity is not specifically intended to benefit the Armed Forces community, you will need to evidence substantial recent work with this community as part of your application.

Some organisations have found that by routinely asking (as part of their internal 'getting to know you' process) whether someone has served in the Armed Forces, they have been able to identify a substantial history of work with the Armed Forces community. They have also been able to signpost veterans to additional support, as a result.

# 4

The Covenant Fund Trust's website has a list of previously awarded grants. Search their website to find others who may have delivered a similar project and try to find out more about their approach.

# Methodist Forces Board resources to support ministry with the Armed Forces community

The Methodist Church has produced a number of resources in support of churches who wish to support the Armed Forces community. All of these can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk) by searching 'Forces Chaplaincy'.



## PTSD initial response resource

The Methodist Forces Board has produced a short guide for churches to help colleagues provide an **initial response to anyone suffering from PTSD** (whatever the cause) and/or their loved ones.

While it has been written with the help of Methodist Armed Forces chaplains, it has a wide application, ie it is not just for military veterans. It is written in language that intentionally reflects this.

This resource may be particularly helpful to a) those who are welcoming people into church buildings b) those who either interact with people concerned about changes in their loved one's behaviour potentially linked to past trauma or interact with vulnerable individuals.

## District map of selected Armed Forces sites

To aid churches to identify their nearest Armed Forces location, Appendix 1 of this document provides a map. An electronic version is available on the **Forces Chaplaincy pages** of the Methodist Church website.

## Armed Forces route to become a local preacher

Armed Forces personnel and their family members who want to get started on the Worship Leading/Local Preaching course can take advantage of the **Armed Forces route to become a worship leader/local preacher**. This allows them to be tutored by someone with extensive experience in the Armed Forces, if their work commitments make it difficult for them to complete the course in the traditional format.

## Roots, Boots and Wings

This **short film** explores the perspectives of young people who are children of Armed Forces personnel.

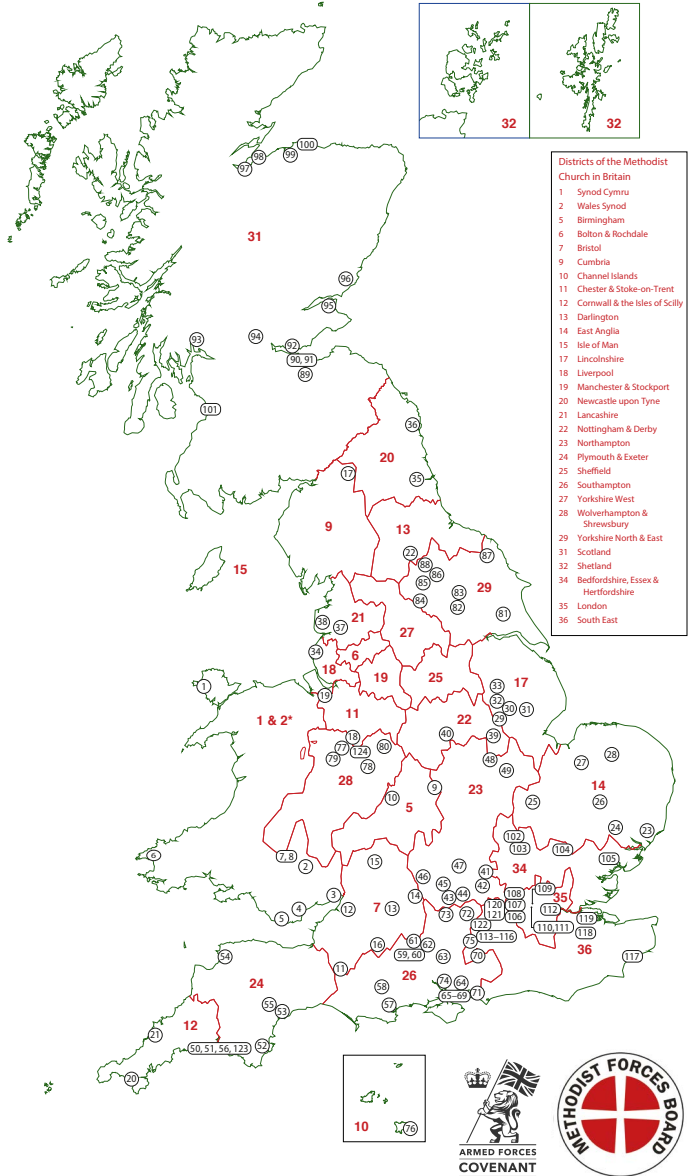
## Soul Man?



This resource can help create a safe space for discussion about what people believe and to hear what others believe. While it was originally developed for attendees of Who Let the Dads Out? groups, chaplains who have used this resource indicate that the topics work equally well for women and mixed delivery, with a little re-branding. *Soul Man?* can help to open up conversations about, for example, 'prayer', 'suffering', 'the soul', 'ambition', 'belonging', 'God'. As a camouflage-covered, pocket-sized hardback book, it has been well received by service personnel.



# Appendix 1: Map of Armed Forces locations in the UK with Methodist Church District boundaries



Site no	MOD site name	Site no	MOD site name	Site no	MOD site name
1	RAF Valley	43	Vauxhall Barracks	84	Army Foundation College
2	MOD Crickhowell	44	RAF Benson	85	Claro Barracks
3	Beachley Barracks	45	Dalton Barracks	86	Alanbrooke Barracks
4	Maindy Barracks	46	RAF Brize Norton	87	RAF Flyingdales
5	MOD St Athan	47	St Georges Barracks	88	RAF Leeming
6	Cawdor Barracks	48	Kendrew Barracks	89	Glencorse Barracks
7	Dering Lines	49	RAF Wittering	109	Regent's Park Barracks
8	The Barracks	50	HMS Raleigh	110	Hyde Park Barracks
9	Gamecock Barracks	51	HMNB Devonport	111	MOD Main Building
10	Royal Centre of Defence Medicine	52	Britannia Royal Naval College	112	Royal Artillery Barracks
11	RNAS Yeovilton	53	Commando Training Centre RM	113	Gibraltar Barracks
12	MOD Abbey Wood	54	RMB Chivenor	114	Aldershot Garrison
13	Defence School of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering	55	Wyvern Barracks	115	Princess Royal Barracks
14	Defence Academy	56	RM Barracks Stonehouse	116	ATC Pirbright
15	Imjin Barracks	57	Hamworthy Barracks	117	Sir John Moore Barracks
16	Battlesbury Barracks	58	Blandford Camp	118	Invicta Park Barracks
17	RAF Spadeadam	59	MOD Boscombe Down	119	Brompton Barracks
18	Clive Barracks	60	DSTL Porton Down	120	Combermere Barracks
19	Dale Barracks	61	Tidworth Garrison	121	Victoria Barracks
20	RNAS Culdrose	62	Army Headquarters	122	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
21	RAF St Mawgan	63	MOD Worthy Down	125	British Forces Gibraltar (not shown on map)
22	Catterick Garrison	64	Defence School of Policing and Guarding	108	Northwood Headquarters
23	Rock Barracks	65	HMS Collingwood	90	Redford Barracks
24	JHC Flying Station Wattisham	66	HMS Sultan	91	Dreghorn Barracks
25	RAF Wyton	67	Institute of Naval Medicine	92	Rosyth Dockyards
26	RAF Honington	68	HMNB Portsmouth	93	HMNB Clyde
27	RAF Marham	69	Navy HQ	94	Stirling Barracks
28	Robertson Barracks	70	Prince Philip Barracks	95	Leuchars Station
29	RAF Cranwell	71	Baker Barracks	96	RM Condor
30	RAF Digby	72	Brock Barracks	97	Cameron Barracks
31	RAF Coningsby	73	Dennison Barracks	98	Fort George
32	RAF Waddington	74	NATS / RAF Swanwick	99	Kinloss Barracks
33	RAF Scampton	75	RAF Odiham	100	RAF Lossiemouth
34	RAF Woodvale	76	Le Quesne Barracks	101	HMS Gannet
35	Fenham Barracks	77	RAF Shawbury	102	Joint Intelligence Training Group
36	RAF Boulmer	78	RAF Cosford	103	RAF Henlow
37	Fulwood Barracks	79	Copthorne Barracks	104	Carver Barracks
38	Weeton Barracks	80	Beacon Barracks	105	Colchester Garrison
39	Prince William of Gloucester Barracks	81	Defence School of Transport	106	Cavalry Barracks
40	Chetwynd Barracks	82	Imphal Barracks	107	RAF Northolt
41	RAF Halton	83	Queen Elizabeth Barracks		
42	Air Command/RAF High Wycombe				

## Appendix 2: Potential approaches for different church contexts

### Finding your starting point in engaging with the Armed Forces community

<b>Do you have veterans in your church/community?</b>	<b>Are you in an area with a military base (check out the map here)?</b>
How could you include veterans in the planning of services, particularly at Remembrance time?	Could the church partner with a local base to send care packages to those on deployment, as a way to express its care to those who are in the Armed Forces?
For veterans you know, perhaps you could ask them how their service in the Armed Forces has impacted on their spirituality? Are there things the church could do to respond to these insights?	Could the church invite an Armed Forces chaplain to speak about the priorities and current commitments of the Armed Forces in the locality? How could you respond to these?
Are there locations or times when veterans meet together locally? Are there any gestures of hospitality you could offer to them at these places?	Are there courses you are running that could be advertised through the local military channels to draw a wider group of people together?
Veterans' charities may be interested in working with you to help reduce isolation, through regular visits or phone calls. Is this something your church could support?	There are often volunteer opportunities with Armed Forces charities that may give you insight and connections into this community. Try searching 'SSAFA volunteers' on the internet.

Do you have serving personnel or families of serving personnel in your church/ community?	If you're unsure whether you have serving personnel/ veterans in your church, how do you commemorate Remembrance Sunday?
Could you invite them to share something of their experience of the Armed Forces to encourage the church to pray for these families?	How could you use this occasion to offer people an opportunity to share their experience of the Armed Forces – which they may not previously have spoken about?
During deployment/on return, are there events the church could host, eg coffee mornings/ after-school activities/parties/ BBQs, which could provide support to this community?	Are there other churches locally that you could work with to strengthen your witness at Remembrance time?
How could your church be flexible with activities, eg courses, to encourage take up by Armed Forces families?	Could you invite a chaplain to come and speak at your church or circuit meeting to help you gain an insight into life in the Armed Forces?
Discipleship is often challenging for members of the Armed Forces; could you encourage them in their faith by writing to them as they move around?	Could you strengthen your knowledge of issues affecting this community, through making links to national or local Armed Forces charities?

Don't worry if you struggle to identify a way forward from this sheet of prompts – many more ideas are contained throughout this resource.